

EXHIBIT A

Free Spam Filter

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Ray Everett-Church on systemic problems with SpamCop

- *Date:* Mon, 04 Nov 2002 15:07:51 -0500
 - *To:* politech@politechbot.com
 - *Subject:* FC: Ray Everett-Church on systemic problems with SpamCop
 - *From:* Declan McCullagh <declan@well.com>
-

Ray Everett-Church is a longtime Politechnical, an attorney, and a board member of the Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial Email (<http://www.cauce.org/>).

Previous Politech message:

"Politech incorrectly blocked by SpamCop -- for the third time"
<http://www.politechbot.com/p-04121.html>

-Declan

From: "Ray Everett-Church" <ray@everett.org>
To: <declan@well.com>, <politech@politechbot.com>
Cc: <julian@spamcop.net>, <deputies@admin.spamcop.net>
Subject: RE: Politech incorrectly blocked by SpamCop -- for the third time
Date: Mon, 4 Nov 2002 11:43:22 -0800

> "There is nothing wrong with the system and it may well happen again.
Sorry."

If you find this statement nonsensical and outrageous, you should. As a veteran of the spam wars for many years, I happen to think using blocklists can be a good thing. But there's quite a difference between a well-run blocklist and the poorly run blocklist at SpamCop.

Julian's system is designed to have a hair-trigger response to any spam complaint from a SpamCop user -- no matter how wrong the complaint is -- which translates through some arbitrary algorithms into a blocklist entry. Julian knows his system creates a situation in which any idiot can report valid mail as spam, which in turn can result in blocking that occurs quickly and without notice. Beyond the potential for outright malicious blocking by a determined individual, it unsurprisingly results in frequent problems with blocked legitimate mail. The errors are predictable and repeatable, but remember, "there is nothing wrong with the system!" It's a feature, not a bug.

Julian has a standard jig he dances when confronted with the crazy situations this badly flawed system causes:

- He defends the erroneous spam reports and demands proof that your mail isn't spam.
- If you can provide that proof, he says, "Oh well, your listing has expired anyway so you have no reason to complain (until the next time)."
- He reminds you that the "disclaimer" on his site recommends the blocklist not be used in production environments, as if that absolves him of responsibility.

In short, SpamCop regularly turns erroneous reports into an erroneous blocklist. In doing so, he willfully harms legitimate mailers. And what's worse, he seems to relish it. As such, he's created a system that adds to the perception of anti-spammers as unreasonable and unconcerned with the damage that their ill-conceived decisions can inflict. This makes SpamCop a continuing embarrassment to those engaged in responsible anti-spam efforts.

Meanwhile, the real problem is with brain-dead sysadmins who abdicate their responsibilities by letting such a demonstrably unreliable system make the blocking choice for them automatically. There are far better blocklists out there with greater reliability. In the end, though, if your ISP is using SpamCop's blocklist, you deserve to lose the mail that you are inevitably going to lose.

-Ray

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